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#### ABSTRACT

Developed for the America Reads Challenge Read\*Write\*Now! program, this tip sheet presents ideas and suggestions for strengthening efforts to help improve children's reading through community reading programs designed to keep children reading during the summer and after school. The tip sheet discusses building partnerships, recruiting volunteers, preparing and organizing resources, promoting reading through the America Reads Challenge and Read\*Write\*Now!; and evaluating the organization's involvement. It also discusses facts about kids and reading, and tips for learning partners. It includes a sample press release and sample radio public service announcements. The tip sheet concludes with a list of resources (and contact information) available from the United States Department of Education, from the American Library Association, and from Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RS)



### Read\*Write\*Now!: What You Can Do

Department of Education Washington, D.C.

Published: 1999

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Kids who read succeed. For children, reading opens up new worlds to explore at the same time it enhances their development. In fact, studies show that children who are read to before they reach school age have a higher rate of success in formal learning situations.

In 1997, President Clinton launched the America Reads Challenge to ensure that children learn to read well. Since then, tens of thousands of people across the country have answered the call — teachers, parents, community and business leaders and librarians are working together to develop community-based reading programs that make a difference in children's lives.

The America Reads Challenge **READ\*WRITE\*NOW!** materials were developed to help support community reading efforts to keep children reading during the summer and after school. The program encourages children to read or write 30 minutes a day, five days a week and to learn one new vocabulary word every day. Children also are encouraged to sign up for and use a library card. One day each week, children are asked to meet with a learning partner—a family member, teacher, librarian, senior citizen or another concerned community member—who provides assistance and encouragement with reading and writing.

Developing a community reading program is easy. All you need is a little organization and the desire to make it happen. To assist you, the U.S. Department of Education, the American Library Association, Reading Is Fundamental®, Inc., Scholastic Inc. and Pizza Hut, Inc. have developed this tip sheet with ideas and suggestions for strengthening efforts to help improve children's reading in your community.

We hope you are as excited as we are about the America Reads Challenge and that you share this information with your colleagues. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Rawlings, President



William R. Gordon, Executive Director

American Library Association

William E. Truehart, President
Reading Is Fundamental,\* Inc.

Richard Robinson, President

Scholastic Inc.

**■**SCHOLASTIC

# What

#### **Build Partnerships**

- Identify and contact potential America Reads Challenge partners for your organization. These include key community members and organizations that have an interest in children's literacy and time to help. Good places to start are literacy organizations, area youth services organizations, bookstores, your local PTA, child care centers, colleges and universities, high schools, religious organizations and senior centers. Virtually every public library offers reading programs and story hours for young children.
- Ask your staff, board of directors, volunteers and supporters for their help in creating an America Reads Challenge program. Their involvement will translate into excitement for the initiative.

#### **Recruit Volunteers**

- Ask your staff and supporters to become learning partners.
   Post a sign-up sheet encouraging people to tutor children in reading.
- Send recruitment flyers and sign-up sheets to community partners and ask them to post the information. Sponsor a "recruitment contest" and recognize the organization that provides the greatest number of volunteers.
- Designate an America Reads Challenge recruiting coordinator at your organization who oversees and organizes volunteers.
- Make it clear to volunteers that no prior experience is necessary. Offer a training seminar to teach them the skills necessary to become effective reading partners.

#### **Prepare and Organize Your Resources**

- Determine how the America Reads Challenge fits into any existing reading programs you may have. If you do not offer such a program, work with your local library to put one together or piggyback onto a reading program already offered at your library, school or other community organization.
- Set aside a special place where children and learning partners can get together. Select an area that is quiet, comfortable and well lit and does not disrupt other activities taking place.
- Make sure that children have parental permission to participate in a one-on-one tutoring session. Prepare release forms for parents to sign.
- Work with your local library and its staff to identify high-quality reading materials for children. The librarian can help you prepare reading lists to help parents and learning partners choose the most appropriate books and other resources for the program.
- Make sure children with special needs are served. If possible, provide materials in Braille, large print and on audiotape. Ask the librarian at your local library for recommendations on materials or visit a local bookstore.
- Direct children and learning partners to resources other than books. Encourage them to review magazines, audiobooks and computer resources at bookstores and at their local library.
- If your organization has online access, encourage children, parents and learning partners to explore resources such as Web sites that offer children's book reviews and the top reading lists for kids. The public library very likely has Internet access if your organization does not.
- Encourage children to write book reviews that will be posted on the America Reads Challenge Web site. Collect the book reviews and make them accessible to other readers.



# Can

## Promote Reading Through the America Reads Challenge and READ\*WRITE\*NOW!

- Display the READ\*WRITE\*NOW! activity poster and create flyers that encourage volunteers and supporters to tutor a child in reading.
- •Include information about the America Reads Challenge in your newsletter and on your Web site.
- Send information to the media. (See sample press materials.)
- Have READ\*WRITE\*NOW! activity posters available to distribute. Photocopy the activity panels for use in group activities. All materials are available free of charge by calling 1-877-4EDPUBS or by visiting http://www.ed.gov./inits/americareads/arc-pubs.html.
- Encourage children in the community to get library cards and to visit the library.
- Launch the America Reads Challenge at your organization with a kick-off event. Invite parents, children, staff, representatives from your partnering organizations and the media to attend. Ask a local business to sponsor the kick-off party. Have a speaker discuss the importance of the America Reads Challenge and how your organization is getting involved. Publicize the event and use the kickoff to recruit volunteers.
- Recognize children who have successfully completed a READ\*WRITE\*NOW! program. Provide certificates of achievement or work with a school to hold an awards assembly.
- Encourage pre-readers and their families to visit your organization and learn about the programs you provide. If you already offer a reading program, set up an extra session for children in child care and encourage caregivers to invite the families with whom they work to become involved as well.



- Determine the number of children and learning partners who participated in your America Reads Challenge program, how often and what type of improvement in reading was seen.
- Share your results with the U.S. Department of Education America Reads Challenge at 400 Maryland Avenue, SW,
   Washington, DC 20202-0107. Your efforts could provide others with valuable ideas and lessons for their own reading programs.



The America Reads Challenge is supported by a number of organizations, including educational institutions, religious and ethnic groups, professional associations, child advocacy organizations and libraries across the nation. Reach out to other supporters of the America Reads Challenge in order to build your community reading program.

A full listing of partners is available on the America Reads Challenge Web site at http://www.ed.gov/inits/americareads/arc-pmem. html or call 1-800-USA-LEARN to learn more.



## Facts About Kids and Reading

The following information will be helpful in convincing potential community partners and learning partners that their involvement is needed. Incorporate these facts into correspondence and promotional materials.

According to the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress, for the first time since reading has been measured nationally, reading scores have improved significantly in the three grades tested. This reflects a renewed commitment to improve reading and momentum for much greater success.

Nearly 4 in 10 American fourth graders, however, are unable to read at the basic level needed for school success. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

With early intervention, including intensive tutoring, the rate of reading failure in the early grades can be reduced to less than 10 percent. (National Institutes of Child Health and Development, Studies from 1996, 1997, 1998)

Half of a child's intellectual development occurs by the time he or she enters kindergarten. The first four years of life are the peak learning years. (A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading, Nancy Larrick, 1975)

Reading aloud to young children helps build language skills critical for later reading success. (Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, National Research Council, 1998) Children who are read to regularly for several months make great strides in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. (The Power of Reading: Insights from Research, Stephen Krashen, 1993)

Fourth-grade students who reported that their teachers gave them time to read books of their own choosing on a daily basis had higher average reading scores than their peers. (National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

The public library is the most influential institution in a child's summer learning. (Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling, Barbara Heyns, 1978)

The threat of illiteracy for children who don't learn to read well is very real. According to the National Institute for Literacy, more than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth-grade level.

The National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education reports that 95 percent of high school dropouts score at the lowest two levels of literacy as defined by national assessments.

According to the National Institute for Literacy, 43 percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty. Workers who lack a high school diploma earn a mean monthly income of \$452, compared to \$1,829 for those with a bachelor's degree.

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# Pips Learning Partners

#### How to use the library

from the American Library Association

The American Library Association offers the following tips to help guide children's reading and library use:

- 1. Encourage kids to explore the public library, and remember that children and teens are naturally attracted to materials intended for them. They are generally not attracted to materials that are too advanced for their reading or maturity levels.
- 2. Provide clear guidelines for children. Let them know if there are subjects or areas that you prefer to be off limits and explain why.
- 3. Introduce children to the librarian and encourage them to seek his or her guidance. The American Library Association and many local libraries publish helpful lists of award-winning children's books and other guides to good reading for children, from babies to teens.
- 4. Familiarize yourself with the library materials children bring home with them. Review all reading lists sent home by classroom teachers and help your child find some of the listed books at the library.
- 5. Talk with children about what they are reading. This will give you insight into their special interests and concerns.
- 6. Learn more about how to evaluate children's books. Most libraries provide books and brochures with guidelines about what is appropriate and appealing at various ages.
- 7. Remember, the library is a public place. Adults should accompany young children to the library.

#### How to read to children

from Reading Is Fundamental®, Inc.

Reading to children is enjoyable and rewarding. Here are some tips to share with learning partners to make reading more fun for them and the child:

- 1. Read the story in advance so that you are familiar with its language and pacing.
- 2. Set the stage by asking a question that will engage children in the story you are about to read. It can be a question based on the title or book cover or can be a hint about what will happen in the story.
- 3. Put some drama in your reading. Change your voice as you move from character to character. Use hand gestures to convey the story.
- 4. Time the reading for 15-20 minutes (or less for preschool-aged children). Anything longer could distract rather than engage children.
- 5. Take time with the story. Stop now and then to ask questions, to explain the meaning of events, or to look at the pictures.
- 6. Use props, costumes or music to make the story come alive.
- 7. Make your reading more interactive by showing the pictures to the children and asking them to explain what is happening or predict what might happen next. To really get children involved, choose a story in which they can echo a phrase or chime in on a refrain.



## Sample Press Release

## Sample Radio PSAs

Retype on your organization's letterhead, double-spaced. Fill in as necessary with your local information, quotes from spokespeople who support children's learning and similar material. (See enclosed "Facts About Kids and Reading.") Send to newspapers and television and radio stations in your community.

For Immediate Release [Date]

Contact: [your name and phone number]

#### [name of organization] Meets America Reads Challenge

(City, State)—The [name of organization] is helping to meet President Clinton and Vice President Gore's America Reads Challenge by participating in a national U.S. Department of Education program called READ\*WRITE\*NOW! The goal of the America Reads Challenge is to help every child become a good reader by the end of third grade. The READ\*WRITE\*NOW! program encourages children to read 30 minutes a day, five days a week, including once a week with a learning partner, and to learn at least one new vocabulary word every day. Children also are encouraged to sign up for and use a library card.

"Research shows that as little as 30 minutes a day can make a tremendous difference for improving a child's reading skills," says [name/title of spokesperson]. "We are sponsoring READ\*WRITE\*NOW! to make sure that the children in our community get the help they need early on."

The [name of organization] is encouraging community members—including parents, teachers, librarians, senior citizens and teenagers—to volunteer as learning partners. All a person has to do is offer his or her time once a week to tutor a child in reading. Sign-up sheets are available for interested individuals. The [organization] also has copies of the U.S. Department of Education's activity poster "READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Share the Fun!" which gives learning partners easy ideas for making their time with children rewarding and productive.

The [name of organization] is working with a number of other community groups to recruit volunteers and spread the word about the America Reads Challenge and READ\*WRITE\*NOW! These include: [list the names of community organizations and ways they are involved].

For more information or to become a volunteer, contact the [name of organization] at [phone number].

The following are public service announcements (PSAs) that can be sent to radio stations in your area. Retype on your organization's letterhead and send to public service directors along with a letter explaining your involvement in the America Reads Challenge and READ\*WRITE\*NOW! program. PSAs should be sent at least 4-6 weeks before you want them to air.

#### :30

How can you spend an hour of your time? You could thumb through a magazine, talk on the phone, shop for more clothes, or change the life of a child. Reading with a child for one hour a week can make a major difference. By learning to read and to love reading, children can excel in school and in life. Call [name of organization] at [local phone number] to learn how you can make a difference for a child. Call [local phone number].

#### :30

Does your child need help with reading? The [name of organization] is sponsoring a program called READ\*WRITE\*NOW! that encourages children to read 30 minutes a day, five days a week and to learn a new vocabulary word each day. Stop by the [name of organization] at [address] to pick up a fun-filled activity poster with all sorts of ideas for making reading enjoyable for children. Or call [local phone number] for more information. Call [local phone number].

#### :20

READ\*WRITE\*NOW! That's the name of a national initiative designed to help children from birth through sixth grade become better readers. The [name of organization] is sponsoring the program and is looking for reading tutors. All it takes is one hour a week. Won't you help? Call the [name of organization] at [local phone number] for more information. Call [local phone number].

#### :15

Children can be better readers by spending just 30 minutes a day reading and building their vocabulary. Call the [name of organization] at [local phone number] for fun, easy ideas to help a child you love become a better reader. Call [local phone number].



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## Resources

President Clinton and Vice
President Gore have challenged
every American to join a national
grassroots literacy effort to help all
children read well by the end of
third grade. Your efforts to meet
this challenge will help prepare
children for school success. The
following publications from the
U.S. Department of Education, the
American Library Association and
Reading Is Fundamental®, Inc.
may be helpful to you.



The following resources are available through 1-877-4EDPUBS/ (877) 433-7827 or the America Reads Challenge Web site: www.ed.gov/inits/americareads

Federal Work-Study On-Line Directory Check the America Reads Challenge Web site to see if your local college or university is among the one thousand institutions that pay literacy tutors and mentors through Federal Work-Study (FWS). The federal government pays 100 percent of the wages for work-study students who tutor children in reading or their parents/caregivers in family literacy programs. Some America Reads colleges have submitted summaries of their programs which can be found in the On-Line Directory, located on the upper left corner of the home page. If your school is not on the list, you can help recruit it by calling the financial aid office or 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Read\*Write\*Nowl Activity Poster
A colorful poster on one side that includes reproducible reading and writing activities on the back. During the summer months, the poster includes the added incentive of free pizza for children who reach their reading and writing goals. The poster was developed in partnership with the Association for Library Service to Children of the American Library Association, Reading Is Fundamental\*, Inc., Pizza Hut, Scholastic Inc. and the U.S. Department of Education's America Reads Challenge. Available in English (order no. EA075R) and Spanish

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(order no. EA078R.)

#### READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Tutoring Kit

(English/Spanish)

A packet developed by reading experts on how to increase and maintain reading achievement and skills for all children—including those with disabilities—during the summer. Activities for reading and writing fun from birth through grade 6. Includes log and certificate. Order No. 98-4505

#### Checkpoints for Progress In Reading and Writing for Families and Communities In Reading and Writing for Teachers and Learning Partners

A booklet to help families and community groups identify what most children can do in reading and writing, by developmental periods, and what most children can read, by grade level. Families and Communities
Order No. EE 0211P
Teachers and Learning Partners
Order No. EE 0212P

#### Learning to Read, Reading to Learn Information Kit

Research-based assistance for schools trying to create an effective reading program for children with learning disabilities. Includes tips for teachers and parents and a network of researchers as resources for schools. Order No. EHE0001K

#### Simple Things You Can Do To Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of Third Grade

A booklet on what a community organization, school, librarian, university, employer or other citizens can do to meet the America Reads Challenge.

Order No. EA0003P

#### READY\*SET\*READ! Early Childhood Learning Kit

(English/Spanish)
Activity guides for families and caregivers with ideas on age-appropriate activities that help children learn about language. Includes a growth chart and activity calendar. Available only at www.ed.gov/inits/americareads.

#### READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Partners Tutoring Program

A manual to provide reading tutors with tools and strategies for one-onone tutoring of school-age children in grades 1-6. Order by calling Hadassah at 212/303-8042, or by email: ccurtis@hadassah.org.

#### The Compact for Reading

A guide on how to develop a Compact for Reading among families, schools, and community members. This is a written agreement among families, teachers, principals, and students that describes how all partners can help improve the reading and other language arts skills of children from kindergarten through third grade. Includes a School-Home Links Reading Kit that provides 100 easy-to-use reading activities for each grade, kindergarten through third. Available by calling toll-free 1-877-4ED-PUBS or at www.ed.gov/pubs/Compact forReading. Order No. EA0076P

#### A Compact for Learning An Action Guidebook for Family-School-Community Partnerships

A user-friendly handbook designed to walk your family-school compact team through the steps of building a compact, from a commitment to sharing responsibility for student learning, to an action plan for a partnership to help children get a high-quality education. Available from 1-877-4EDPUBS or www.ed.gov/PFIE/titlei.html. Order No. EE0060P

#### On the Road to Reading A Guide for Community Partners

Information on how most children learn to read, how to involve families, how to build community partnerships and how to develop a tutoring program. Available by calling 1-877-4EDPUBS or at www.etr. org/NSRC/pubs/otr/ontheroad.html. Order No. EAT0007P

#### Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

A 1998 report issued by the National Research Council that synthesizes the wealth of research on early reading development. Copies are available from the National Academy Press for \$35.95. Available by calling 1-800-642-6242 or at www. nap.edu/readingroom/books/prdyc.

## Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success A guide developed by the National Research Council that explains how children learn to read and how adults

can help them. Provides ideas that parents, educators, policymakers and others can use to prevent reading difficulties in early childhood and the primary grades. Based on the 1998 National Research Council report Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. Copies are available from the National Academy Press for \$14.95 (prepaid) plus shipping charges of \$4.00 for the first copy and \$.50 for each additional copy. Available by calling 1-800-624-6242 or at www. nas.edu/subjectindex/edu.html.

#### Including Your Child

A booklet for parents with special-needs children, covering the first eight years of life. Gives suggestions to parents that will help them relate to their special-needs children and show them how to find support services for their children and themselves. Includes a developmental progress chart and an extensive list of potentially useful resources for these parents. Available by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS. Order No. ER0285P

#### NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation

This report presents the results of the 1998 NAEP national reading assessment of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students. Students' performance is described in terms of their average score on a scale of 0-500, and in terms of the percentage of students attaining three achievement levels: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The report includes results for subgroups of students defined by various background and contextual characteristics. The 1998 results are compared to those of 1994 and 1992. Order by calling 1-877-4ED-PUBS or at http://nces.ed.gov. Order No.ERN2798P

#### Helping Your Child Learn to Read

This Web site, created by the U.S. Department of Education, focuses primarily on what parents can do to help children up to 10 years of age become lifelong readers. It includes some basic information about reading to one's child. While most of the book is for parents of children up to 10 years of age, there is a brief section for parents of older children on how to help them continue to grow as readers. http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Reading/index.html

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ALA's Guide to Best Reading Includes annual reading lists from the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), Booklist, Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), and Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). Each booklet includes camera-ready brochures and bookmarks. The packet includes: ALSC's Notable Children's Books and Peace and Understanding through Children's Books: The Mildred L. Batchelder Award Books, Booklist's Editor's Choice, RUSA's Notable Books, and YALSA's Best Books for Young Adults. \$29.95. To order, call: 800-545-2433, press 7.

#### **Book Links**

This attractive bimonthly magazine for teachers, librarians, and parents of preschoolers and elementary and middle school children pulls together books around themes such as forests, endangered animals or the Civil War. Many articles contain teaching strategies and discussion questions, making Book Links ideal for working with children at home. Interviews with authors and illustrators of children's

books add another dimension. One year (6 issues) \$18.95; two years (12 issues) \$34.95; three years (18 issues) \$47.95. Subscriptions outside the United States and Canada are \$24 a year or \$48 for airmail delivery. Order from Book Links/Web, 434 W. Downer Place, Aurora, IL 60506. Phone: 630-892-7465. http://www.ala.org/BookLinks

#### Booklist

A book review magazine covering both adult and children's books. Published 22 times a year. Subscriptions to Booklist are \$69.50 a year or \$130 for two years. Subscriptions sent outside the United States are \$85 a year. Order from Booklist/Web, 434 W. Downer Place, Aurora, IL 60506. Phone: 630-892-7465. http://www.ala.org/booklist

Born to Read: How to Raise a Reader
This brochure, available in both
English and Spanish, recommends
materials and tips on how to start your
infant or toddler on a lifetime of reading.
50 per package, \$18. English: 7872-X.
Spanish: 7986-6. To order, call:
800-545-2433, press 7.
http://www.ala.org/alsc/raise\_a\_
reader.html

#### Kids Connect @ the Librory: Tips for Porents

This American Library Association Web site offers tips to parents on how to raise a reader and foster a lifetime love of learning and reading. http://www.ala.org/parentspage/tfp2.html#10ways

#### The Librarian's Guide to Cyberspace for Parents & Kids

ALA Public Information Office, 1998. This popular brochure includes an introduction to the Internet for parents, safety tips, suggested Web sites and more. First 50 copies free, additional copies \$15/50. Telephone: 800-545-2433, ext. 5044/5041. E-mail: pio@ala.org

For Realingle

The following resources are available by calling Debbie Wilson at 202-287-3220. Also check the Reading is Fundamental®, Inc. Web site at http://www.rif.org.

#### **Family Facts**

Available in English and Spanish, this 24-page booklet provides a place to keep important information about immunization, health and school. Also features tips on raising readers. Single copies \$1.75, 25 or more (multiples of 25) \$25/25.

Helping Your Children Become Readers Available in English and Spanish, this illustrated black and white cameraready flyer features 10 reading tips in simple language. \$2.

#### Read With Me Video Set

Winner of the 1998 Bronze Apple Award and the Cine Golden Eagle Award for excellence in educational film and video, "Read With Me" and "Read With Me—the Teacher-Parent Partnership" feature practical suggestions for parents and teachers of preschoolers. A viewer's guide contains handouts for families and teachers, and tips for using the videos. The set of two videos and the viewer's guide is \$29.95.

#### RIF's "Growing Up Reading" Activity Poster

A poster on one side and reproducible activity panels on the other. This delightful poster illustrates the many small but meaningful ways that families foster a love for reading in their children. Full-color, 22"x34". Shipped folded. \$5.



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400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202-0107 Telephone: 202-401-8888 Fax: 202-260-8114

America Reads Challenge Web site http://www.ed.gov/inits/ americareads

America Reads Challenge Toolkit http://www.ed.gov/inits/ americareads/resourcekit

Partnership for Family Involvement ation
FRIC fie.ed.gov

50 East Huron Street Chicago, IL 60611 Telephone: 800-545-2433, ext. 2163 Fax: 312-944-7671 E-mail: alsc@ala.org http://www.ala.org/alsc

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http://www.scholastic.com

MARTIN ROOT ON HEATHER

P.O. Box 2999
Wichita, KS 67201
Telephone: 1-800-426-6548
Fax: 316-685-0977
E-mail: read@bookitprogram.com
http://www.bookitprogram.com

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